so, it is diminished. The Cold War and our policy toward South Africa are just two examples of policy based upon our nation's bedrock principles. Such an opportunity will apparently present itself this year with the anticipated vote in Congress on granting permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with China.

After months of studying the issues; after dozens of meetings with various groups and individuals on both sides of the issue, such as the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, business leaders from Montgomery County, human rights activists and labor leaders; I have decided to oppose granting PNTR to China at this time.

Fair trade and economic growth in this new economy are very important to me, but not at the expense of the principles for which this country stands.

I remain committed to free and fair trade. I cosponsored and voted for the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act in both the International Relations Committee and on the floor of the House, and I hope to vote for it again when it is reported out of conference committee. I also cosponsored another free trade measure for Africa called the ''Hope for Africa Act.'' Last year, I supported granting a one-year extension of normal trade relations (NTR) with China. I support a comprehensive engagement with China that includes free and fair trade, but only after China has demonstrated a willingness to become a responsible member of the world community.

By granting China PNTR, we surrender the only effective economic and political tool to effect positive change in China—the annual vote to renew NTR. Without this, China has little reason to improve its actions and image in the world community.

There have been too many broken promises by the Chinese government. There are too many protesters in prison. There are too many religious persecutions. There are too many military threats.

China's record on human and workers' rights continues to be abominable. Take for instance the story of Liu Baiqiang. While serving a 10-year sentence for theft, Baiqiang, in support of the 1989 pro-democracy movement, wrote messages calling for freedom and the end of tyranny on scraps of paper and released them into the air attached to the legs of locusts. For this he was sentenced to an additional eight years in prison.

The leadership in China continue to threaten Taiwan, even at a time when we are considering PNTR, just because Taiwan practices democracy. China continues to develop and contribute to the proliferation of missile and nuclear technology, exporting it to rogue nations around the world. China continues to violate environmental standards for development and industry, ignores fair labor standards and safe working conditions and uses child, low wage and even slave labor to produce many goods for export.

Finally, China has yet to live up to any of the previous trade agreements it has signed with the United States. I am not convinced that China will be any more likely to change this behavior once it is granted PNTR status.

I firmly support a renegotiation of the terms of the U.S.-China bilateral treaty that would provide greater safeguards against Chinese abuses and outlaw behavior. I have participated in two working groups established by Members of Congress that are striving to identify the issues that should be renegotiated and ways to initiate the renegotiation.

A treaty that provides a free and fair trade agreement with safeguards that could better guarantee appropriate Chinese behavior in the world community would receive my full support.

Granting China PNTR now might be economically rewarding, but it would be morally bankrupting.

NATIONAL WESTERN AGRICULTURE FORUM

HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2000

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, prior to the start of the second session of this 106th Congress I held a widely attended agriculture forum at the 94th Annual National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colorado. The forum featured twelve experts who presented their views on three of the most challenging issues facing agriculture—biotechnology, international trade and federal farm policies.

I will now summarize the remarks of the panelists and commend to our colleagues the opinions shared at the Colorado forum.

The first panel addressed biotechnology. Mr. Roger Bill Mitchell, President of the Colorado Farm Bureau, began by addressing the overriding concern of the biotechnology panel; consumer awareness. ''Consumer acceptance is the key to biotechnology's success. Currently, the public is mislead by propaganda . . . if the benefits of biotech were put forth then the public would support the technology,'' he said. ''It is up to the farmer and rancher—us—to market biotech products and to educate the public. We have to respond to the markets. Even when the consumer is wrong, he's right.''

Dr. Cecil Stushnoff, Director of Horticulture at Colorado State University said the term ''genetic engineering'' evokes suspicion and fear. ''A gap of knowledge generates fear of the unknown. The public should be informed that biotechnology could help in stopping viruses, killing insects, serving as vaccines, and preventing disease,'' he said.

Dr. Stushnoff said the public should also be advised of the risks to human health and to the environment. ''The only way to ensure public support is to assess each product on a case-by-case basis. More research in this field is needed to answer consumer questions. Biotechnology has enormous potential.'' Dr. Stushnoff also warned of foreign nations that, as a matter of national policy, have promoted campaigns of hysteria regarding genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Here again, it seems education is the key.

Mr. James Geist, Executive Director of the Colorado Corn Growers, said genetic modification is an age-old practice which has traditionally been limited by a lack of technology. ''Modern technology helps to determine accuracy of genetic modification,'' he said. ''The media has embraced the topic to get 'shock appeal' and have blown out of proportion the realities of biotechnology. The current hysteria is not reasonable and could be curbed by informing consumers about the truth, reality and functionality of genetically modified goods.'' Mr. Geist also emphasized GMOs as a viable solution to meeting the growing demand for food. ''With the current population growth, we must use GMOs.''

Mr. Jim Rubingh, Director of Markets for the Colorado Department of Agriculture continued with Mr. Geist's concerns about global population. ''By the year 2050 the human population will have to produce as much food as the world has produced in the last 12,000 years. Biotechnology allows for inexpensive, nutritious, and plentiful food production. Although there are risks, biotechnology can also save lives.'' Mr. Rubingh believes a unified, regulatory system needs to be established by Congress to ensure genetic varieties are not abused.

Mr. Speaker, our second panel addressed trade. Mr. Tim Larsen, an International Marketing Specialist with the Colorado Department of Agriculture, provided examples of how the agriculture industry is suffering. ''The U.S. farmers are doing a good job. They are just not getting the global price they deserve.'' Mr. Larsen went on to say, ''The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has proved good in Colorado. From agricultural entities, only 19 trade claims, nationwide, have been filed against NAFTA, none have been filed from Colorado. However, Colorado does need a level playing field to compete globally.''

Dr. Alan Foutz, Vice-President of the Colorado Farm Bureau, said the problem is a lack of export markets to sell our excess products. ''America should not abandon NAFTA and GATT,'' he said. ''The U.S. government must address the crisis facing agriculture imposed by high tariffs and other trade barriers. It is essential for the administration to work with foreign governments to open up markets. Future trade relationships with China are important, simply because China is a larger market. We must sell our surplus to foreign markets,'' he said. Reauthorizing Fast Track is important. He urged Congress to avoid adding environmental and labor riders on the reauthorization bill.

Dr. Foutz also reminded Congress that regulatory expenses are also barriers to trade. ''I don't want the government to bail me out. Allow me to sell to foreign markets easier that it is today.''

Mr. Larry Palser, President of the Colorado Wheat Administrative Committee, said farmers need Congressional help to compete with other countries. ''More markets must open and sanctions must be removed,'' he said. Mr. Palser urged Congress to phase out export trade subsidies, but should not reduce tariffs until the other country in question complies with terms of fair trade. ''America lost $7 billion to sanctions,'' Palser stated.

The Colorado Wheat Administrative Committee supports Most Favored Nation Trade Status for China. ''The European Union must be forced to reduce export subsidies,'' he said. Mr. Palser's remarks are hereby submitted for the RECORD.

STATEMENT BY LARRY PALSER, PRESIDENT, COLORADO WHEAT ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE, TO FORUM ON AGRICULTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss some of the important trade issues that are vital to the economic stability of Colorado wheat producers. As you know, Colorado is a major producer of wheat and a large exporter. When we are unable to trade wheat overseas the economy of Colorado is hurt.

We know that worldwide demand for high quality wheat is increasing, but competition is also increasing. For Colorado wheat producers to successfully compete for sales around the world we need your help and the help of all of your colleagues in Congress. Colorado wheat producers can compete with any other farmers, but we cannot succeed in a world market place where we are forced to compete against foreign governments. There are a number of issues that I wish to call to your attention that need to be addressed for Colorado wheat producers to successfully compete in the export market in the new millennium.

Continuing to open export markets by expanding and improving our trade agreements is essential. The recent World Trade Ministerial in Seattle was to have set the agenda for continuing to strengthen member countries commitments to opening world markets and to begin the work on renegotiating the agricultural agreement. While we are very disappointed at the lack of a positive outcome in Seattle, our trading partners must be held to the agreement to move forward with the agriculture negotiations as agreed to in the built-in-agenda of the Uruguay Round.

The new round of negotiations of the WTO will be one of the best avenues to achieve meaningful reforms. The new round of negotiations must move forward as soon as possible. A broad set of wheat industry concerns was developed as a set of recommendations for our negotiators and others involved in the WTO negotiations.

I would like to share with you the following key WTO issues for wheat: the elimination of all direct export subsidies within three years; elimination of monopolistic state trading enterprises to provide discipline to price discriminating practices, which distort world markets; the elimination of inequities that persist between the U.S. levels of domestic support and those of our competitors; and expansion of market access (U.S. agricultural tariffs should not be further reduced until such time as other countries make significant tariff reductions and tariff peak disciplines).

Sanctions reform is a priority legislative issue. A lot of very good work has been done on sanctions reform over the past several years. On November 17, 1999, a letter with 220 signatures of your House colleagues was delivered to Speaker Hastert asking for ''meaningful reform of food and medicine sanctions policy in the 106th Congress.'' The letter gave three reasons why Congress should act to end these sanctions. They are: (#1) Unilateral food and medicine sanctions do not work because our allies freely supply the same products to sanctioned states; (#2) Denying access to food and medicine is an abhorrent foreign policy tool; and (#3) Unilateral sanctions punish American farmers and depress American commodity prices by denying access to significant international markets.

We in the Colorado wheat industry are in full agreement with your colleagues on these reasons. Sanctioned markets currently buy $7 billion of agriculture commodities each year from our competitors. USDA estimates that rural communities lose $1.2 billion in economic activity annually because of unilateral sanctions. I ask you on behalf of all wheat growers to make removal of these sanctions a prime objective when you go back to Washington, D.C. in a few days.

Permanent Normal Trade Relations (NTR) for China is another priority issue. The bilateral agreement that China signed in April of 1999 is fully implementable. The next step is for China to begin to purchase wheat. This is a very important agreement because it resolves the phytosanitary argument that impeded U.S. wheat sales to China for years. China has now agreed that there is no threat from TCK.

The really big issue facing China is entrance into the WTO and Congressional approval of permanent NTR. This is necessary if the U.S. is to achieve the benefits negotiated in the U.S.-China WTO agreement. Without permanent NTR, China is not bound to comply with the agreement. Other members of the WTO will be in a position to gain by reduced tariffs and other market protections negotiated for WTO membership and the U.S. producer will be the loser in this huge and growing market.

Trigger mechanism legislation is also a priority. The U.S. wheat industry has worked with Senator Baucus on a bill that would require the Secretary of Agriculture to take action if the European Union (EU) does not reduce and subsequently eliminate agricultural export subsidies. This legislation would require increased funding for the Export Enhancement Program (EEP), the Foreign Market Development (FMD) program and the Market Access Program (MAP). These programs are all important to U.S. agriculture's competitiveness in the world market place. S. 1651 is called trigger legislation as it would be triggered it the EU fails to lower its subsidies. I respectfully ask you to work with us to introduce similar legislation in the House.

There has also been talk of rejuvenating EEP, however, this does not appear likely in the near term. Each year any unused allocated EEP funds are lost from USDA's budget. A bill was introduced at the end of Congress by Senator Patty Murray of Washington State that would provide authority to the Secretary of Agriculture under certain conditions to use unexpended EEP funds for FMD and MAP. The Murray bill authorized MAP at $200 million, while making the current $90 million level a minimum rather than a maximum amount. It also establishes the FMD program at a minimum of $35 million annually. We believe this is an important bill needed to capture these much needed funds in programs we know are successful.

Congressman Schaffer, these are a few of the trade issues that are important to the wheat industry that we ask for your support and help with. The Colorado wheat industry looks forward to working with you.

Mr. Vernon Sharp, President of the Colorado Cattleman's Association agreed with Mr. Palser. ''We must increase access to international markets, eliminate unfair trade policies and reemphasize domestic trade policies through country-of-origin statutes and mandatory price reports. Stop using agriculture products as a bargaining chip,'' Sharp said. ''Trade barriers must be based on scientific research. We can't allow ourselves to become dependent on a foreign food supply like we are on oil,'' he said.

Our final panel, Mr. Speaker, addressed federal farm policies. Mr. Peter Sperry, Budget Policy Analyst with The Heritage Foundation, states that one cannot plan strategy around changing government policies. ''Government policy is misdirected and fails to hit the targeted goal.'' Mr. Sperry asked, ''Should the federal government be in agriculture at all?'' He continued by emphasizing the enormous price tag for federal farm programs.

''The cyclical nature of the cattle industry makes if difficult for the federal government to maintain a fair support program. Let people keep the money they make.

''Farmers have difficulty planning rational policy in the face of federal meddling. The federal government should get out of agriculture. Be careful what you ask for, because you just might get it. If the agriculture community says 'stay with subsidies,' that's what we'll get.''

State Conservationist, Steve Black, countered saying there was a definite role for the government. ''Government can provide agriculture assistance. The best assistance is generated from voluntary incentive-based programs such as conservation on private lands, abundant food, clean water, decreased greenhouse gasses, wildlife habitat, open space and wetlands habitat,'' he said. ''Seventy percent of land is managed by private farms and ranches. Good national resource management is important.'' Black said 88% of the nation's water runs off from private land.

''Farmers do a better job of preventing wind erosion and promoting carbon sequestration and wetlands preservation. When public money goes into agriculture, it's well spend.''

Mr. Lynn Shook, a state board member of the Colorado Farm Bureau brought the discussion back to less federal involvement. ''Federal farm subsidies shouldn't be allowed. The farmer should get a fair price first. The 1996 Farm Bill had too many regulations,'' he said. ''Farmers need help to increase trade markets.'' Mr. Shook went on to say farming is risky. ''The U.S. government needs to provide a real crop insurance program,'' he said. Mr. Shook's full testimony follows.

STATEMENT ON FARM POLICY—LYNN SHOOK

My name is Lynn Shook. I grow wheat and sunflowers near Akron, Colorado. I am a member of the Colorado Farm Bureau Board of Directors. I would like to thank Rep. Schaffer for the opportunity to discuss future farm policy. I would also like to thank him for representing farmers and ranchers like myself in Washington, D.C. In order to fully discuss current and future farm policy I think it is important to look back on how the current farm bill was created and passed.

The ''Freedom to Farm'' concept embodied in the 1996 farm bill has come under much criticism as the cause of the current economic problems in agriculture. People seem to have lost perspective on what the 1996 bill did and did not do and the circumstances surrounding passage of the legislation.

By 1995, producers had become increasing disenchanted with the acreage controls and the lack of planting flexibility that had evolved out of the 1977, 1981, 1985 and 1990 farm bills.

Planted acreage was restricted most years with acreage reduction programs (ARPs) while the rest of the world kept planting more acres. Base acreages had been locked in for most crops since 1985. The world was changing, but U.S. agriculture was locked into past planting patterns.

After the experience of the early and mid 1980s, producers were also well aware that we could not use the farmer-owned grained reserve to store our way to prosperity. The reserve was restricted in size and price influence in the 1990 farm bill, and elimination seemed to be the next logical step in 1995.

While these changes were going on with agriculture, a new farm bill was also faced with substantial federal budget pressures. As the farm bill debate began in 1995, President Clinton's budget proposal for fiscal year 1996, the budget year beginning on October 1, 1995, showed yearly budget deficits at $200 billion for the next five years. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the budget estimating arm of Congress, had a similar forecast.

The federal budget deficit had been a political issue for 20 years. The new Republican controlled Congress was determined to bring the issue to a head and resolve it. As 1995 progressed, President Clinton began overtures to the Republicans to find a budget compromise that would lead to a balanced budget.

The Republicans and the President were also talking about regulatory reform, tax relief and foreign market development, all issues important to farmers and ranchers.

Given producer concerns about planting flexibility, stocks, policies and the political winds of balanced budget efforts and other policy changes, a status quo policy based on extension of the 1990 farm bill became less and less achievable as the 1995 farm bill debate dragged into late 1995 and into 1996.

The Republicans in Congress promised that regulatory, tax and market development changes would be forthcoming, but a farm bill had to be passed to fit within a budget deal that was on a fast track for action in 1996.

Budget pressures on a farm bill were nothing new. The 1990 farm bill was passed and then immediately changed by the 1990 budget deal to fit within its budget restraints.

Agriculture was faced with a choice between greater program flexibility and fixed payment rates, agricultural market transition assistance (AMTA) payments, or trying to swim against the budget policy stream and less program flexibility.

The 1996 farm bill has also been criticized for lower loan rates for the major crops. That did not happen. Loan rates began moving down in 1986 with the implementation of the 1985 farm bill. That was continued in the 1990 farm bill. The 1996 farm bill did not mandate lower loan rates. It gave the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to lower loan rates. It did put in place loan caps to prevent the Secretary from raising loan rates.

Farmers and ranchers accepted the changes in farm policy, but Congress and the President did not delivery on regulatory reform, tax relief and market development. The regulatory burden on farmers and ranchers has gone up, not down. From the FQPA to wetlands to labor regulations, farmers and ranchers are more heavily regulated than ever before.

Farmers and ranchers received some tax relief in 1997 and 1998, but it was minor compared to the total impact of estate taxes and capital gains taxes.

Farmers and ranchers have received virtually no help on trade issues. Congress and the Administration have not delivered on trade negotiating authority, have not increased funding for USDA market development programs and have not worked out problems with existing trade agreements. Only recently has the Administration begun dealing with trade issues with Canada and removing trade sanctions with major potential trading partners like Iran.

The recently announced Farm Bureau AgRecovery plan outlines what we believe needs to be done in the short run and lays out where farm program policy must focus in the long run.

First, direct federal assistance will continue to be needed in the short and intermediate terms. We will not dig out of the current hole in a year or two.

Second, development of markets at home and abroad must be a high priority. Farmers and ranchers must be able to produce and sell. Direct federal assistance can help in the short run, but we must produce for markets to be profitable in the long run.

Third, agricultural production is a high-risk business. Crop insurance reform has been a constant refrain throughout the 1990s. The 1994 reforms were supposed to be the mother of all reforms. We tinkered again in 1998 and are now making further changes in 1999 to take effect for 2000 to 2004.

To effectively deal with risk management, we must focus more on risk management and less on just crop insurance. Risk management education is also important.

Farm and ranch risk management accounts (FARRM) supported by Farm Bureau is a step toward alternative ways of managing risks.

Revenue insurance may be a way to cover both crops and livestock. This may also be an approach to help producers without impacting land prices.

Fourth, Congress and the Administration must finally face up to the regulatory straight jacket they have placed on agriculture. Politicians love to talk about prices and what they believe they can do to increase prices. They hate to talk about the cost of government regulations.

U.S. farmers and ranchers operate in a global food economy. Every regulatory cost impacts their ability to compete. Farm Bureau has called for a regulatory impact payment of $5 billion per year as the first step in shifting the cost of the regulatory process run amok back to Congress and the President.

The AgRecovery plan does not address the issue of counter-cyclical income assistance. This idea has been given increased attention in the last few months and needs further attention as an intermediate and long-term policy direction. AMTA payments under freedom to farm are fixed payment regardless of income. The target price system focused exclusively on price and did not take into consideration the interaction between prices and production.

A program for counter-cyclical income assistance may be a complement to a more effective risk management program to help buffer against production and price risks.

New opportunities in conservation programs, including water quality, should also be explored.

The AgRecovery plan also speaks volumes about what we don't want in future farm program policy. We do not want to lose the planting flexibility provided by the 1996 legislation. We do not want increases in price supports that would make us non-competitive in world markets. We do not want to further build carryover supplies by recreating the farmer-owned reserve. We do not want to cut acreage to qualify for farm program participation. That would reduce the net benefit of the programs and encourage producers in other countries to increase output.

We must learn from the good and the bad of the last 20 years of farm program policy and build for a brighter future.

The President of the Colorado Association of Wheat Growers, Dusty Tallman, indicated the farm crisis is not going away. He said Freedom to Farm was good, but had some minor problems. "The Endangered Species Act has helped to create the farm crisis," he said. "The farm crisis is not going away. We need to work to improve farm programs, reform taxes, cut regulation and reform the Loan Deficiency Program." Mr. Tallman also submitted his testimony in writing which I now submit for the RECORD.

STATEMENT BY DUSTY TALLMAN, PRESIDENT, COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF WHEAT GROWERS TO FORUM ON AGRICULTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

On behalf of Colorado's wheat growers I wish to thank you for your continued support—in good times as well as bad. We especially appreciate your leadership and commitment.

While it may sound like a broken record, the farm crisis continues to impact the lives of wheat growers every day. USDA figures show that Colorado wheat prices are averaging only $2.20 per bushel so far this marketing year. Wheat prices are now at 45 percent of the high achieved in the 1995–96 market year. Wheat prices this last summer hit a 22-year record low. That's worse than anything we say in the early 1980's—the era that saw numerous farm foreclosures and massive farm aid. And wheat prices have actually dropped another 22 cents per bushel since last summer.

After three years of low prices, the farm crisis is not going away. USDA's best analysts have predicted that wheat prices will not improve without some sort of adverse weather problem somewhere in the world. USDA will update its price projections at this year's Outlook Forum in late February. However, current estimates predict another 18 months of low wheat prices.

In the face of continued financial stress, some have started to blame the 1996 Farm Bill. While the Bill did not prevent this disaster, it is not fair to claim that it caused it. Colorado wheat growers support the concept of "Freedom to Farm." We like having greater flexibility and the risk associated with it. Today's crisis would have been much more devastating had we been forced to abide by the old, top-down management of previous farm bills.

However, while we do not want "Freedom to Farm" repealed, there is clearly a need to improve federal farm policy before more farmers are forced off their land. The 1996 Farm Bill lacks a reliable farm safety net. With no floor, wheat prices continue to drop.

The Colorado Association of Wheat Growers (CAWG) believes that we must add a country-cyclical economic assistance payment to the farm bill. For two years, we have relied on emergency spending to provide the assistance we need. This ad hoc system should be replaced with a statutory payment triggered by low prices.

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) is currently developing an outline for just such a payment. The plan will be finalized at the NAWG annual convention in February and presented during the House Agriculture Committee's field hearings this spring and summer.

There are also other things you and your colleagues can do today to help wheat growers. We continue to await congressional action on tax reform, Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China; crop insurance reform and sanction reform.

I am pleased to be with you today and pledge the support of CAWG to help you find real solutions.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, it was a good forum. The information derived must be used to ensure agriculture is not forgotten.

As the House prepares to reauthorize the 1996 Farm Bill the conclusion of the Colorado agriculture forum should be considered by our colleagues.

INTRODUCTION OF CARE 21

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2000

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to restore our Nation's historic commitment to insuring lifetime health care for retired coal miners. Joining me in introducing this bill, which will be known as CARE 21, is a bipartisan group of our colleagues: BOB NEY, SPENCER BACHUS, RICK BOUCHER, TIM HOLDEN, RON KLINK, ALAN MOLLOHAN, JOHN MURTHA, TED STRICKLAND, and BOB WISE.

Enactment this year of CARE 21, the "Coal Accountability and Retired Employee Act for the 21st Century," is necessary if we are to avoid seeing a curtailment in health care coverage for thousands of retired coal miners and their widows. Indeed, this would not be the first time that Congress has acted in this matter. In 1992, in what is known as the "Coal Act" enacted as part of the Energy Policy Act, Congress established the UMWA Combined Benefit Fund (CBF) combining the union's 1950 and 1974 benefit plans. This action came in response to changes in the coal industry which created a large class of 'orphaned' miners whose benefits were no longer being paid by an active coal company. A key feature of the Coal Act was the financing of orphaned miner health care costs through an annual transfer of a portion of the interest which accrues to the unappropriated balance in the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund.

Simply put, in restoring abandoned coal mine lands we must not abandon the retired coal miner.

The Coal Act was working well, health care for retirees whose former employers could be identified would be financed by premiums paid by those companies while to date, $193 million in reclamation fund interest and a one-time $68 million additional appropriation has financed orphaned miner care.

However, a rash of recent adverse court decisions have been rendered which once again is threatening the financial integrity of the program. Among them, what is known as the "Chater" decision which overturned the Social Security Administration's premium determination reducing premiums by 10 percent. Another court decision ordered the CBF to refund about $40 million in contributions. And the Supreme Court's decision in the Eastern Enterprise case added some 8,000 retirees to the orphaned miner rolls. The result: Without a new source of funds, the CBF will face a cash shortage beginning next year forcing the curtailment and ultimately the cessation of health care coverage for some 70,000 retirees and widows whose average age is 78.

CARE 21 takes a relatively simple and straightforward approach to addressing this impending crisis. First, it would transfer the amount of interest that is currently languishing in the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund to the CBF that was not previously made available for orphaned miner health care. This would provide an immediate infusion of roughly $172 million. Second, it would lift the restriction in current law that reclamation fund interest can only be used for orphaned miner health care. This action would serve to cover future shortfalls in the CBF.

I would note that interest accrues to the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund at a rate of about $83 million a year. Meanwhile, there is a $1.7 billion unappropriated balance in the Fund. CARE 21 in no way adversely affects the abandoned mine reclamation program. The principal remains intact for that effort, and is fueled by annual reclamation fees assessed on every ton of mined coal which finances the program.

As such, one of the key features of CARE 21 is that the general taxpayer is not being called upon to pay for retired coal miner health care, but rather, the coal industry itself would provide for this coverage through the interest which accrues to the fees it pays into the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I noted earlier there is a historical commitment to providing health care for retired coal miners. This is a unique situation in that what would normally be a matter solely for the private sectors is not in this instance. The genesis for this situation dates back to 1946 in an agreement between then-UMW President John L. Lewis and the Federal Government to resolve a long-running labor dispute. At the time, President Truman had ordered the Interior Secretary to take possession of all bituminous coal mines in the country in an effort to break a United Mine Workers of America strike. Eventually, Lewis and Secretary Julius Krug reached an agreement that included an industry-wide, miner controlled health plan.

In fact, the 1992 Coal Act itself was formulated partly on the basis of recommendations from the Coal Commission, established by former Labor Secretary Libby Dole, which in 1990 recommended a statutory obligation to help finance the UMWA's Health Benefit Funds.

Mr. Speaker, the people covered by this health care program spent their careers producing the energy which powered this Nation to greatness. We must not forsake them. We must not cast them adrift in their later years, robbed of the health care they so desperately need.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JACK METCALF

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2000

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, on March 28, I was excused from the business of the House. Had I been here, I would have voted "yes" on rollcall vote 76 (H.R. 2412); "yes" on rollcall vote 77 (H. Con. Res. 292); "yes" on rollcall vote 78 (H. Con. Res. 269); "yes" on rollcall vote 79 (H.R. 5), The Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act.

2000 EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. VAN HILLEARY

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2000

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 3908) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes:

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Chairman, I am very pleased today to support this important amendment, which will help clean up methamphetamine labs and come to the aid of law enforcement across the country.

Last year, funding was ended for this support program, and the funds were entirely diverted into training. I feel that decision was a mistake. Local law enforcement needs this money directly in order to offset the high costs associated with meth lab cleanups. They need it in order to more effectively fight the war on drugs and clean up the contamination and environmental problems these labs leave behind.

In my own district, individuals like Sheriff Eddie Bass of Giles County in Tennessee have effectively used these dollars in the past. Working in conjunction with the Drug Enforcement Agency, Sheriff Bass has made great strides in reducing the number of methamphetamine labs in Giles County. But cleaning up these labs is expensive, very expensive for rural law enforcement agencies that have limited resources to begin with. Our rural law enforcement officers, like Sheriff Bass need our help to combat this national problem.

Sheriff Bass has already implemented state-of-the-art programs and facilities. I personally have toured the local jail in Giles County and can say from first-hand experience that it is deserving of every accolade as one of the model examples in the state. Now, I also want to provide him, and outstanding officials like him, the ability to continue the model meth lab cleanup programs that they had in place.

We must give officials like Sheriff Bass the support that they need. Otherwise, we will be sending them a message that it may not be financially worth their trouble to stop the production in these labs. Let's instead send a message to drug dealers and producers that we will stand behind the efforts of federal and local law enforcement in the war against drugs in our communities.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this amendment so that these dollars will once again be able to be used by local law enforcement officials like Sheriff Bass.

VETERANS' HISTORIAN AL KADY PRESERVES CENTRAL NEW JERSEY'S CIVIL WAR HERITAGE

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 30, 2000

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of two veterans, of two wars, 80 years